

# AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

## FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

AND

## UNION LITERARY SOCIETIES,

OF

## CENTENARY COLLEGE, LOUISIANA,

On Tuesday, July 27th, 1852.

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BY HENRY S. FOOTE,

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.

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JACKSON:

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE SOUTHERN STAR.

1852.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY  
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

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## Correspondence.

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JACKSON, LA., AUGUST 7TH, 1852.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY HENRY S. FOOTE:

*Sir:*— We have been appointed by the two Literary Societies, of Centenary College, of Louisiana, to request of you, if convenient, for publication, a copy of your Address, delivered to them at our last College Commencement.

Yours, very respectfully,

C. N. HINDS,  
T. C. KERNAN,  
C. H. RATLIFF,  
J. D. WORTHY.

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JACKSON, MISS., AUGUST 12TH, 1852.

MESSRS. C. N. HINES, T. C. KERNAN, C. H. RATLIFF, J. D. WORTHY:

*Gentlemen;*— I herewith forward you a copy of the Address delivered by me on the 27th ultimo, to be disposed of according to the pleasure of the Societies represented by you.

Most cordially, and respectfully,

H. S. FOOTE.



# Continued

1800-1810, American Republics

1810-1820, American Republics

We have been supported by the two leading American  
publications, the *North American Review* and the *Quarterly Review*,  
of your American Republics, and the *Quarterly Review* of your American Republics.

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## ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN :

It is with feelings of very high gratification that I proceed, in compliance with your kind invitation, to address you upon the present occasion. I thank you, gentlemen, for affording me the opportunity of holding free and friendly commune with so large a number of the ingenuous youth of the republic; in whom I gladly recognise those whose minds are happily exempt from illiberal prejudices of every kind, and in whose hearts, I cannot doubt, have been already implanted Benevolence, and Justice, and refined Patriotism, and love of all useful learning; hereafter, as I confidently hope, to fructify in acts of practical utility and substantial honor, which shall win for you the unbought praises of good and enlightened men everywhere, and the lasting esteem and gratitude of your own countrymen.

It is scarcely necessary, gentlemen, that I should remind you, that by far the most important period of your lives is now in progress; that every day and hour which you shall now occupy judiciously, may be the harbinger of extensive and enduring benefits to yourselves and to millions of others; and that every moment which you may waste in idleness, or devote to unprofitable pleasures, may become a plenteous source of woe and of discredit to yourselves and to all connected with you, either by the ties of kindred, or those of social companionship. I doubt not that truths so obvious as these are already familiar to your understandings, and that they have become closely intertwined also with the inmost sensibilities of your hearts.

I do not propose to set forth before you, in a labored and pompous harangue, the peculiar and surpassing dignity of intellectual pursuits in general; nor shall I take especial and wearisome



pains to impress upon your minds the comparative worthlessness of all those occupations of social life which do not in some way contribute to the dignity and the happiness of man as a rational creature.

Gentlemen : We live in an age of unequalled moral and intellectual progress. At no former period, has the light of science been so generally diffused among the multiplied inhabitants of earth ; nor has science itself ever been so successfully cultivated in all its higher departments. I may properly add, that there has never been a time when its value was fairly appreciated by so large a number of the active and influential members of society. Indeed, an opinion is now prevalent, and I hope that it is destined to become more and more firmly established, that ignorance, which is *voluntary*, is both degrading and mischievous ; and the man who, in any of the more enlightened communities of the world, obstinately refuses to possess himself, according to his opportunities, of some respectable portion of those intellectual treasures which have been accumulated in the vast repositories of printed learning to be almost everywhere found ; or who turns a deaf ear to the living instructors, who stand ever ready to impart those lessons of priceless wisdom, which can alone fitly qualify him for the performance of his manifold civil duties, deserves to receive, and he will assuredly not fail to receive, the contempt of all intelligent and public-spirited persons—and must eventually find himself completely isolated from the sympathy and respect of all whose friendship and esteem are really worth possessing. It would be indeed strange were this not the case in the United States, where facilities for the acquisition of knowledge are so abundant, and where knowledge, once obtained, is so eminently capable of being used in furtherance of all the important objects of a high condition of social existence. In truth, nothing is so well calculated to attract the public regard in this country, as those instances (so happily multiplied among us of late) of individuals whose fortune it has been to be born and to be brought up in obscurity, and to be cut off, in early life, from all the advantages of academical and collegiate training, who have been able, notwithstanding, by extraordinary personal exertions, not



only to fit themselves for performing, in a creditable manner, the customary duties of social life, but whose general mental superiority has been made so manifest, as to mark them out, in the estimation of their countrymen, for the highest civic honors known to our form of government.

But although there may be but few persons to be found, anywhere within the circle of civilization, who do not at least *profess to entertain* a proper and becoming respect for scientific and scholastic attainments; yet is it true, gentlemen, as you will hereafter, yourselves, most clearly ascertain, that there is a still smaller number of individuals who can fairly lay claim to have devoted themselves, with perfect fidelity, to the cultivation of their understandings in the methods now most approved. It is certain that I have no recollection of having at any time met with an individual, however distinguished he might be for general erudition, who did not confess, with sorrow and mortification, that he had wasted a much larger share of the period of youth and early manhood, than he had judiciously and profitably occupied in intellectual pursuits; and that his efficiency and usefulness in society had been most lamentably circumscribed, in consequence of his failing to take advantage of the opportunities with which he had been favored, of fostering his capacities for mental improvement, and drawing into free and active developement those noble faculties of the soul, which can alone elevate man above the inferior classes of animated nature.

Mr. Addison has finely said: "*The mind that lies fallow for a single day, sprouts up in follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous cultivation;*" and I do not at all doubt that it may, with equal truth, be asserted, that the physical powers of man are not more certain to fall into decay and to lose their elastic vigor for want of adequate employment, than is his mind to sink into feebleness and inefficiency, in consequence of being allowed to remain, for a series of years, to a great degree, untasked and unexerted.

Gentlemen: There is much in the condition and prospects of our country, which justifies me in asserting, that such inducements to high mental culture as are held forth in this favored



part of the globe, have never before been anywhere presented to the consideration of men. It is only here that political institutions have been established upon the basis of absolute equality and freedom; where a written constitution, deriving its existence and binding force from the will of the whole people, has so wisely and happily apportioned out the powers of government, between the sovereign States which constitute our confederacy, on the one hand—and the great central agency, to which has been exclusively confided the administration of all exterior and strictly national concerns, on the other—that, whilst the domestic safety and quiet of the former are most effectually guaranteed, and their progressive advancement provided for; the authority of the Federal head is so prudently restrained and limited in some respects, and enlarged and expanded in others, as, at the same time, to prevent any serious encroachment upon the reserved rights of the States and people, and to multiply and replenish our energies and resources, as a great and free Republic, to such an extent as to have commanded for us already the universal respect and admiration of mankind.

Whatever lofty pretensions may be asserted elsewhere, *we* know, that it is only in this country that civil and religious freedom is enjoyed in all its vivifying and inspiring fulness:—*that* civil freedom which tolerates no restraint upon the will of individuals not necessary to the general happiness—*that* religious liberty which, (in the language of one of the most celebrated writers of the present century,) “*equally admits the members of all sects to the privileges, the offices, and dignities of the commonwealth.*” In this happy region, alone, has the mind of man been thoroughly emancipated from those antiquated systems, and semi-barbarous prejudices, which have so long held it in degrading bondage—repressing its noblest energies, and embarrassing and defeating its most hopeful enterprises. Here may the adventurous *seeker after truth* roam at pleasure over all the wide domain of human thought and action: no subject of investigation is withheld from him: no impediment is interposed to his making known to others his free thoughts, in any form which may seem to him expedient. Earth, air, and ocean are before



him for his scrutiny. The radiant vault of Heaven, with mild and serene effulgence, seems sweetly to solicit his regards, and gently to whisper to him the glories that await him above the visible firmament. It is *his* to examine both books and men; to explore the subtle plans of policy which may have found origin in the scheming minds of earth's most Lordly Potentates; and to lay open the hidden motives which slumber in the deep recesses of that mystery of mysteries, *the heart of man*. It is *his*, if he shall choose to do so, with a sober and staid ambition, to develop all the arcana of Physical Nature—or, by a process of methodical reasoning, far purer and more perfect than Plato and Aristotle ever knew—to penetrate the depths of Infinitude itself, and unfold the august attributes of Him, whose throne is in the Heaven of Heavens. And, it is even his, should an over-fanciful curiosity betray him into such extravagance, to soar upon the wings of Mesmeric ecstasy, to those far-off and sequestered realms, where spiritual existences are alone supposed to dwell, and, (on returning once more to earth) he is not prohibited from *communicating* to madly-credulous disciples, dark secrets of the Past, the Present, and the Future,—more wondrous far, it must be confest, than all which sagest Philosophers have taught, or visionary Rhapsodists have depicted. No grim Inquisitorial tribunal stands here ready to check and to overawe the earliest dawnings of theoretic truth, and to punish with imprisonment, with torture, and even with a fiery death, every pious attempt to purify the worship of the Deity from the manifold corruptions which long ages of Ecclesiastical tyranny have never failed to engender.

No invidious censorship of the Press stifles here the generous aspirations for enlarged freedom, and suppresses the rising murmurs of a noble people groaning under the weight of a Despotism too oppressive to be patiently submitted to—too powerful to be overthrown by any sudden movement of resistance—too deeply involved in crime ever to be ameliorated by a process of gradual reform. No upstart Usurper, abusing the glories of an immortal name, and availing himself of an overweening admiration for the illustrious achievements of a former generation, dares unblushingly to proclaim himself, under the assumed sanction of the



people themselves, the Imperio-Presidential Master of their destinies ; or presumes to send forth his heartless edicts for the *deportation* of all who may be even suspected of cherishing in their breaking hearts, a latent abhorrence of his lawless deeds, and a lingering hope, oft-baffled and as oft-renewed, of the ultimate deliverance of their country from his monstrous Dictatorship. No pretended judicial trial, consigns the gifted champion of freedom to some far-off Australian prison-house ; there to pine in degrading and comfortless captivity, until he shall be able, in some moment when the vigilance of his ruffian keepers may chance to be relaxed, to bid adieu to chains and to oppression, and put a wide ocean between himself and his insatiate persecutors.

In the natal land of Washington and Franklin, has been opened the only safe asylum for the woe-stricken and the down-trodden of other climes. Throughout our broad confines, the all-potential spirit of *Progress* is in action ; and, under its magical influence, such has been the rapidity of our growth in national greatness and renown, as completely to outstrip all the prodigies of the past, and to bid seeming defiance to the boldest and most sanguine calculations of what may await us in the future. That vast continental expanse, which, a little more than two centuries ago, was one unbroken wilderness, has been already transformed into cultivated fields, and thriving villages, and great commercial cities. Science and the Arts have moved onward, with a diffusive energy that has astonished the world. It is *ours*, to behold, in exultant retrospect, such ancestral glories as never before found emblazonment upon the page of authentic history. It is *ours*, to possess, in peace, a region extending from ocean to ocean ; eminently blessed in regard to the productiveness of its soil ; the richness of its mineral treasures ; the healthfulness of its climate ; its numerous navigable rivers ; its noble inland seas ; its capacious bays and harbors ; its magnificent canals and railways ; its facilities of all kinds for the transportation of commodities from place to place, and for the transmission of all useful intelligence. We are blessed with a body of wise laws, which, for the most part, have been so administered as to preserve social order and guarantee domestic tranquillity. Universal religious toleration has im-



parted to Christian piety that genuine dignity and earnestness which never fail to characterize the worship of Deity, when it is allowed to be purely *voluntary*. *Pauperism*, at least in the degrading forms which it often assumes in the densely populated districts of the European continent, is almost wholly unknown in the United States. Institutions for the distribution of charity—for the suppression of vice, and promotion of virtue, are every where multiplying beyond the most extravagant dreams of the philanthropists of former ages.

*The newspaper press*—that great disseminator of practical instruction, and distributor of political intelligence—that terrific moral engine, before which crowned monarchs tremble upon their thrones, and priestly tyranny shrinks into feebleness and contempt—has become among us the beneficent regulator and corrector of public sentiment—the supporter and defender of persecuted virtue—the terror of wrong-doers, however powerful in wealth or influence—the main pillar in the edifice of freedom! If it be seen, sometimes, in unworthy hands, to prove shamelessly forgetful of its high vocation, and to sink into a wretched vehicle for the propagation of radical errors in government or morals, or for the unjust assailment of individual motives and character; happily for mankind, it is sure, in all such cases, very soon to lose its influence over public opinion, and, by its very efforts to perpetrate mischief, becomes eventually powerless for the infliction of permanent injury.

The means of obtaining the elementary principles of a sound practical education, are to be found wherever our population is not too sparse for the support of Schools; and Academies, Colleges, and Universities are seen to spring up, almost in our primeval forests, to meet the growing intellectual wants of our constantly extending settlements.

It is our peculiar good fortune to be so situated, in regard to other nations, that we may reasonably calculate upon the lasting enjoyment of *peace*—with all its attendant blessings; unless we shall equally disregard the salutary monitions of our revered fore-fathers, and the obvious dictates of a sound national policy.

Though the American Republic is still in its infancy, yet has



its capacity for successfully coping with all the exigencies of a war with foreign powers, been more than once triumphantly demonstrated.

Several occasions have also arisen in our domestic history, within the last fifty years, of a nature severely to test the strength and solidity of our governmental fabric; and I rejoice to declare that the result, in every instance, has been such as to confirm the hopes of the patriot, and to disappoint the sinister vaticinations of the enemies of freedom.

GENTLEMEN: We have been offering a tribute to the wisdom which is so apparent in the frame-work of our government. We have been felicitating ourselves upon the success which has so far attended upon our history as a nation. We have acknowledged, with grateful and glowing hearts, the present prosperous condition of the Republic. We have looked forward, with glad and confident expectation, to the glories which are already so resplendently beaming upon us from the vista of the future. Why may we not, for a brief moment or two only, glance back to those scenes of excitement, and strife, and momentous peril, through which we have so recently passed, and from which thank heaven we have been at length so wonderfully rescued?—Why shall we not rejoice, as patriots, that the war of *sectionalism*, which has been so long disturbing the quiet of the Republic, has been at last brought to a happy termination? that after a struggle, in which all the elements of mischief seemed to have been strangely and ominously commixed and conglomerated; which, whilst it lasted, filled with solicitude and alarm the souls of our sagest and most resolute statesmen; which arrayed the North against the South, and the South against the North, and, to some extent, brought into fierce and unsparing conflict, men of the same local vicinage and political party; the steady good sense and unswerving patriotism of the American people have been such, that, regardless alike of the absurd ravings of an unreasoning fanaticism, and of all other influences of a nature to stimulate them to the adoption of extreme and fatal measures—they have been seen to rise up, almost as one man, and to declare, in a voice not to be disobeyed, that commotion, and turmoil, and angry crimination,



should cease, and that peace and brotherly feeling, and true concord should once more return to bless us with their renovating presence? Gladly would I dwell longer upon this prolific theme. Cheerfully would I bear my testimony to the merits of all who, either in the national councils, or in primary assemblages of the people, or in the sacred desk, aided in stemming the torrent of excitement which was sweeping so wildly over the land, and contributed towards restoring the public mind of the country to its accustomed serenity and repose. But the occasion is not such as to allow me the performance of this pleasing duty. I cannot consent, notwithstanding, to remain altogether silent in regard to the conduct of *one*, alas now no longer among the living! whose recent lamented demise has filled the Republic with grief; to whose high character and inestimable public services political opponents are now vying with political friends and supporters in the rendition of such unmixed homage and commendation as no public man has heretofore received among us. I allude, of course, to the *venerable chairman of the celebrated committee of thirteen*—to the august American Senator, who united in his character the best and brightest traits of Nestor and Ulysses combined; who had the sagacity to discern the dangers which surrounded his country in time to rescue that country from ruin; who had the wisdom to mature, the courage to propose, and the commanding eloquence to sustain, against all opposition, a plan of pacification and settlement, which has already done more for these United States, than Marathon, and Plataea, and Thermopylae, did for Greece; to whom, and to the majestic part which he acted at a crisis so dangerous and perplexing, more than to any other personage of whose achievements the historic pen has borne testimony, may be applied the memorable language of the Roman poet:

“Ac veluti magno in populo quum sæpe coorta est  
Seditio;  
Jamque faces et saxa volant; furor arma ministrat:  
*Tum, pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem  
Conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus adstant;  
Iste regit dictis animos, et pectora mulcet.*”

The season of strife and commotion has now passed by. Faction has at last fretted itself to rest. The howlings of fanatical madness are heard no longer, threatening with hideous ruin all



that is most valuable in the institutions of our fathers. The faint and feeble moanings of baffled demagoguism, are making themselves audible for the last time, and amidst general ridicule and contempt, in our halls of national legislation. Experience has so triumphantly demonstrated the wisdom and wholesome efficacy of the measures of compromise, that no further opposition to them is seriously to be dreaded in any quarter. Both of the great national parties of the country have formally ratified and endorsed them. The people, in their primary assemblies, have given them their sanction. Those who formerly opposed and denounced them most, with slight exceptions, award to them now their hearty support and commendation. They now stand canonized and irrevocably confirmed by the death of their immortal Proposer and ablest Advocate and Defender. Henceforth these measures must be recognized as entitled to command a reverential respect and obedience only second to that which is accorded by all true patriots to the organic law of the Republic itself. A grateful posterity will not fail to understand, with what absolute propriety the author of all this good might have exclaimed in the moment of his departure from earth, had he chosen to boast his own glories :

“ Exegi monumentum ære perennius,  
Regalique situ pyramidum altius ;  
Quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens  
Possit diruere, aut innumerabilis  
Annorum series, et fuga temporum.  
*Non omnis moriar : multaque pars mei  
Vitabit Libitinam.*”

GENTLEMEN: I have now spread out the map of your country before you. I have pointed you to those fields of honorable exertion in which you are expected hereafter to labor. I have invited you to those scenes of intellectual activity in which you are expected hereafter to participate. I have endeavored to impress upon your minds the good which is to be done, the fame which is to be acquired, and the rewards which are to be secured, by the judicious cultivation of your intellectual powers, and by devoting those powers, in their most improved condition, to the service of your country and the world. You have inferred, doubtless, that I entertain the opinion that there is but little in the instruc-



tion which is bestowed at our schools and colleges, which is really valuable, except so far as it may be calculated to prepare those who shall become its recipients for the *active and important duties of life*.—Though I am probably as far as most other persons from too lightly estimating those unequalled models of classic composition which have come down to us from Grecian and Roman sources ; and am by no means regardless of the rich treasures of ethical wisdom which have been bequeathed to us by the sages of antiquity ; yet must I be permitted to declare, that I consider the acquisition of all the languages which are no longer spoken, to be chiefly important so far as we may be enabled by their instrumentality more easily and perfectly to master and to apply those stores of practical instruction which lie hidden in books that have never been correctly translated into our own tongue. A familiar acquaintance with the principal modern languages, is admitted to bring with it several additional advantages of very high value indeed ; as we may be thereby enabled to hold edifying oral intercourse with learned men now living ; may secure to ourselves favorable access to the circles of polished and fashionable society in other countries besides our own ; and become possessed of facilities for the conducting of business, either diplomatic or commercial, which no one can enjoy who is altogether ignorant of the language of those with whom his dealings must be necessarily carried on. In relation to all the branches of science comprised in the usual academical or collegiate course in the United States, one general remark may be safely hazarded : *Nothing is worth studying that is not of a nature to strengthen the understanding, to polish the taste and mannerz, or to purify and liberalize the heart.* All learning is utterly profitless which does not tend to fit a man more completely for the performance of his social and religious obligations, or which does not enable him to be serviceable in some way, either to individual members of the community with which he stands connected, or to mankind in general. In enforcement of this view of the subject, allow me to conclude, in hearing of this scholastic audience, in the language of Cicero : *Itaque nisi ea virtus, quæ constat ex hominibus tuendis, id est ex societate generis humani, attingat cognitionem rerum,*



*solivaga cognitio et jejuna videatur ; itemque magnitudo animi, remota communitate conjunctioneque humana, feritas sit quædam et immanitas. Ita fit, ut vincat cognitionis studium consociatio hominum atque communitas. And again, discoursing on the same subject, he says: Etenim cognitio contemplatioque naturæ manca quodam modo atque inchoata sit, si nulla actio rerum consequatur.*